

FCER Forum

Stephen R. Seater

Maturity Revisited

In Dr. Arnold Cianciulli's Dynamic Chiropractic column, "Maturity," he has repeatedly called for a coming together of the various chiropractic organizations to dialogue with one another. He believes that it is time to stop calling each other names and begin talking and understanding one another, so that eventually a common strategy can be agreed upon to secure the profession's future.

There is no doubt that many field doctors are suffering with the onslaught of managed care. It is no longer business as usual. Many of the old political and legal strategies to achieve parity are not working well. Many observers believe that chiropractic is facing the greatest challenge in its 100 year history; that the time has come to put aside differences and begin working together toward common goals.

A truly mature profession should be capable of not only dialogue, but also developing some kind of common strategy to achieve its objectives. Personally, I admire the spirit of rugged individualism and independence that I've seen in this profession. The problem that I see is that independence has been put on a pedestal, so to speak. Independence comes before anything else, and there is no recognition that interdependence is what is required to cope effectively with the many forces acting upon the profession.

In his brilliant book, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, Stephen R. Covey, PhD, discusses the importance of interdependence, not only for individuals, but for whole organizations and groups of people. He insists that the principles he has elucidated in his best selling book apply to groups every bit as much as to individuals. I agree with this statement and believe that the chiropractic profession has much to learn from Dr. Covey's work which emphasizes the principle of interdependence over independence. This does not mean that independence is lost or that individuality is of no importance. In fact, it is quite the opposite, interdependence cannot be achieved without first being independent.

When individuals, groups, or whole professions operate in an interdependent mode, they are able to synergize or greatly magnify their efforts to achieve specific goals. According to Dr. Covey, it is crucial to try to understand others before being understood. This is a sign of maturity that, when practiced, pays big dividends. I believe this is what Dr. Cianciulli has been calling for in his writings. Chiropractic groups need to come together and dialogue with one another, seeking to understand, rather than simply making their case and being understood first and foremost.

To operate in this manner requires coming to the table with a Win/Win attitude, not Win/Lose, as is often the case. As Dr. Covey says, "Win/Win is a frame of mind and heart that constantly seeks mutual benefit in all human interactions." What I've seen taking place in most business and organizational negotiations is the attitude of the strong vs. the weak, or playing hardball to win at all costs. Dr. Covey points out: "This kind of thinking is fundamentally flawed. It's based on power and position rather than principle. Win/Win is based on the paradigm that there is plenty for everybody."

In my opinion, there is room for nearly everyone within chiropractic. There's no reason why straights and mixers, primary care generalists and musculoskeletal specialists, scientists and practitioners, the ACA and ICA, etc., cannot dialogue, strategize, and work toward a common goal of advancing the entire chiropractic profession. But, I caution that this cannot be done without Win/Win thinking or without understanding at a very deep level where each of us is coming from. If the profession as a whole can operate in this mode, it will lead to synergy and to strength far greater than our profession currently enjoys.

America needs an alternative to traditional allopathic medicine. I strongly believe that a window of opportunity has opened for chiropractic to emerge as the profession of wellness doctors, however, the window will close and the opportunity will be missed if the profession does not unite and seize it now.

The National Chiropractic Mutual Insurance Company, the leading source of support for research through FCER, has invited all of the major chiropractic organizations to participate in a leadership conference to be held in Chicago on September 20 and 21, 1996 (see "NCMIC Calls Leadership Conference" in this issue). The idea is to begin dialogue in the hopes that some common goals can be reached. FCER will be there. Let's hope that the organizations that attend can all sit at the table in a mature way with a Win/Win attitude. The future of this noble profession may depend upon it.

Stephen Seater, CAE
FCER Executive Director

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